

ARTICLE APPEARED
ON PAGE A13WASHINGTON POST
7 August 1986

Chilean Was Source in Helms Inquiry

Santiago Aide Complained to U.S. Envoy of 'Spies' Stealing Secrets

By Joanne Omang
Washington Post Staff Writer

A Chilean government official was the source for administration charges that someone in the office of Sen. Jesse Helms (R-N.C.) leaked sensitive intelligence information to Chile, a State Department official said yesterday.

The Chilean complained to U.S. Ambassador Harry G. Barnes on July 16 that "spies" were stealing Chilean military secrets and, when Barnes asked what he meant, the Chilean said Helms' office had told him so, the U.S. official said.

Helms called the account "a concoction," adding yesterday, "There is no such Chilean official unless he's lying through his teeth." Barnes "would have no credibility in any court of law," Helms said.

Sources close to the event said the issue involved a classified Chilean armed forces report blaming Chilean soldiers for the burning death July 6 of a young antigovernment demonstrator.

Knowing that the United States had the report enabled the Chileans to shut down a U.S. intelligence-gathering operation that had been very productive, the sources said.

An FBI investigation into the alleged leak began July 18 at the request of the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence and has focused on Christopher Manion, a committee staff aide to Helms, as a possible suspect, the sources said.

Manion and Helms have denied involvement, and Helms yesterday accused "a coalition of the media, the Marxists and the State Department" of seeking to destabilize Chile through a disinformation campaign.

The existence of a written Chilean military document was first reported yesterday by National Public Radio.

According to The Washington Post's sources, the Central Intelligence Agency cited the internal study in its congressional briefings as evidence that the Chilean government knew its soldiers had doused demonstrator Rodrigo Rojas de Negri, 19, a Washington resi-

dent who was visiting his native Chile, with gasoline and set him afire in Santiago on July 2. He died four days later.

Manion was among those who received a CIA briefing on the Rojas case, but Helms did not, an intelligence community source said. Barnes heard from the indignant Chilean official "within hours" of Manion's briefing, the State Department official said.

The official stressed that that did not necessarily mean it was Manion who made contact with Santiago.

In an interview, Helms challenged the State Department to produce evidence against his office. "There is none; it's a hoax," designed to discredit him because of his firm opposition to department policies, he said.

The military report blaming Chilean soldiers may not exist either, he said, adding, "The CIA saying it doesn't make it true."

One intelligence official said CIA details of the report in its briefings "are almost a road map to how we got the information." The techniques in question had been used to monitor army support for Chilean President Augusto Pinochet, among other things, and have been closed down. "That's why we were upset," the official said.

A Chilean Embassy spokesman here reiterated Chile's position that it has received no intelligence leaks. A Chilean official noted that the affair has at least documented CIA covert-intelligence activity in Chile and said "this of course has to have an impact" on U.S.-Chilean relations.

That could include monitoring U.S. Embassy personnel, visa delays or difficulty in obtaining interviews, the official said.

In a speech yesterday in Greenville, N.C., Helms said the State Department has targeted him in part because he had revealed \$2 million in CIA aid to President Jose Napoleon Duarte of El Salvador in 1984. "I blew the whistle on them," Helms said.

Helms visited Chile the week after Rojas died and endorsed Pinochet's claim that Rojas had accidentally set himself afire with a device he had been carrying. Helms crit-

icized Barnes for attending Rojas funeral and defended Chile's progress toward democracy, which the State Department has been trying to accelerate.

The State Department, not for the first time, was furious at Helms, but this time one of its officials went public. Elliott Abrams, assistant secretary of state for inter-American affairs, publicly called Helms' remarks "indefensible."

Later, Abrams "mentioned" to Sen. David F. Durenberger (R-Minn.), chairman of the intelligence committee, the department's dismay about the leaked information and the suspicion that Helms' office was involved, according to an Abrams spokesman. That led to the chairman's request for a probe.

In the interview, Helms said other committee members told him they were "indignant" that they had not been consulted about an investigation request.

He noted that Morton I. Abramowitz, director of the State Department's Bureau of Investigation and Research and familiar with intelligence activity, "doesn't like me either because I blew the whistle on him selling Taiwan down the river."

Helms has opposed Abramowitz's nomination to be assistant secre-

tary of that bureau. Helms said, "You have the makings of a nice little conspiracy down there [in the State Department] against a senator who has dared to call their hand about the private agenda of the bureaucracy" to undermine President Reagan's policies.

In a speech prepared for delivery today, Helms says Barnes and Abrams are working to "support the violent communist left" and have left democratic forces in Chile "high and dry."

A spokesman for Abrams reiterated U.S. praise for Barnes and support for "transition to democratic rule in Chile by the most effective means." Helms is "simply wrong" in his other charges, the spokesman said.